

THE SUN SANDALS

Making Custom-Fitted Soft-Soled Leather
Sandals by Hand, in Just a Few Hours.



Copyrights 2022 by Lougaya Laure Dehan



TABLE OF CONTENT

[Preface](#)

[The Tools](#)

[1- Choosing and Assembling the Pattern](#)

[2- Tracing on the Leather](#)

[3- Cutting the Leather](#)

[4- Punching the Holes](#)

[5- Cutting Leather Lace](#)

[6- Lacing the Front](#)

[7- Lacing the Heel](#)

[One Step Further](#)

[Video and Patterns Access Links](#)

[Bonus / Making Soles](#)

[Making Other Moccasins](#)

[How I Became a Moccasin Maker](#)





Hello, I am Lougaya.

I will guide you through this step-by-step tutorial to teach you how to make custom-fitted leather sandals.

These “Sun Sandals” are a variation of a very ancient pattern well spread all around Europe. It is very simple to make as there isn't sewing at all. We will just cut, make holes, and lace it together.

I like to wear them barefoot in the summer as they allow good airflow, but they make great winter slippers with a pair of thick socks as the laces can open to adapt to this extra layer easily.

You might have come across the same style but with cut petals at the front. That design is interesting when using stiff leather. Here I use soft leather to be able to fold the front. In this way, I have found that it protects the feet better as less sand and stones come in. Moreover, soft leather is more comfortable and easier to work with.

I hope you will make good use of these teachings and patterns.

The Video Tutorial

Before starting to read the PDF, know that all the following steps are available in video tutorial. Some steps (optional) like reinforcing the petals, custom-fitting the heel, and making soles are only in video.

The video tutorial is available for purchase on [our Etsy shop](#) or [on Amazon](#).

The Patterns

Patterns are made to be printed on A4 or US letter paper. They can be printed on basic office paper, but it is more practical to have them printed on slightly thicker paper.

View, download and print the patterns via this link:

<https://earthing-moccasins.systeme.io/2a724990>



The Main Tools:

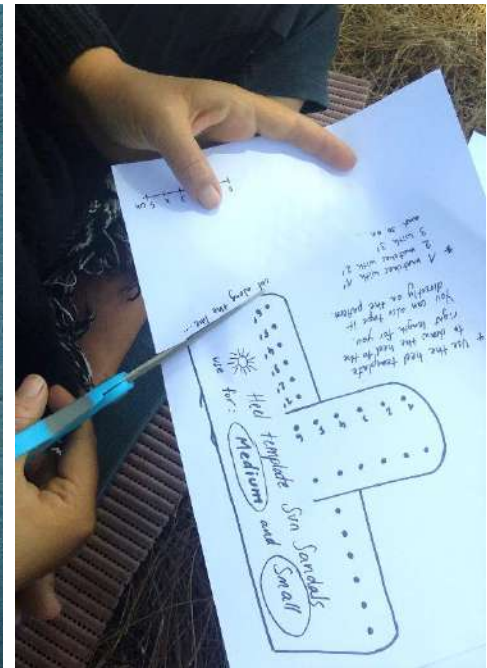
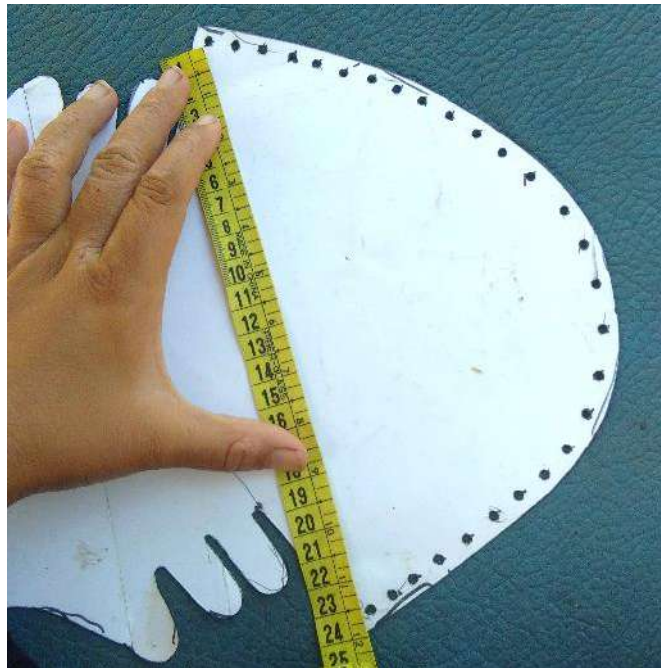
- a permanent marker (silver, white or golden if on dark leather)
- a pair of sharp scissors
- supple leather of about 1.2 to 2 mm thick / 3 to 6 oz.
(usually chrome tanned leather. It can also be recycled from an old jacket or furniture...)
- a hammer and a hardwood tablet or wooden block
- a leather punch of 3- or 4-mm / 1/8 inch in diameter or a plier leather punch (optional)
- an awl and waxed thread if you decide to stitch the heel.

Leather and tool kits are available on [our online shop](#) as well.



Other Tools for the Patterns:

- a printer with US letter or A4 paper
- paper scissors (It's better to keep your leather scissors ONLY for leather to keep them sharp.)
- paper glue or sticky tape
- a tape measure or a piece of non-elastic thread and a ruler.



1- Choosing the Right Size and Assembling the Pattern

Print the patterns **in full scale (100%)**, if possible, on semi-thick paper. You can check if it was printed on the right scale with the gauge.

Measure the width of the ball of your foot and compare that measurement with the patterns to find the best fit in terms of width. To do so, measure the distance between the two extreme opposite holes like in the picture. We will take care of the length after.

Once you choose if you are going to use pattern S, S+, M, or L, cut the front, the back, and the heel template. When you cut, follow the black line on the “inside” of the line so that the line will disappear from your patterns.

Note: If you find yourself being in between two sizes, you can try printing the patterns in a slightly smaller or bigger size (in the printing parameters, try with a custom scale of 104% for instance.)



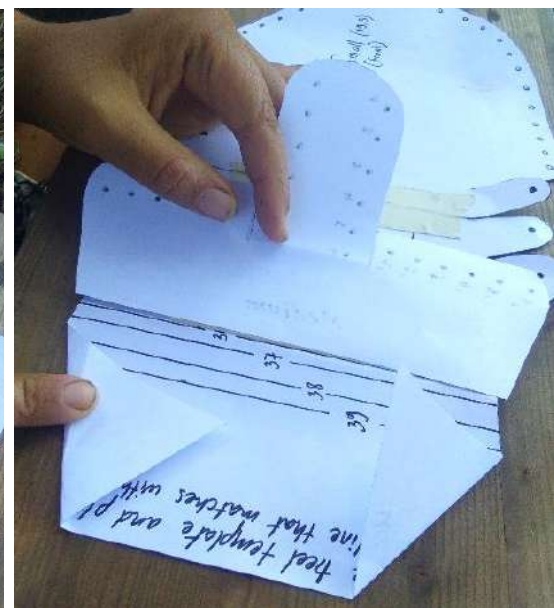
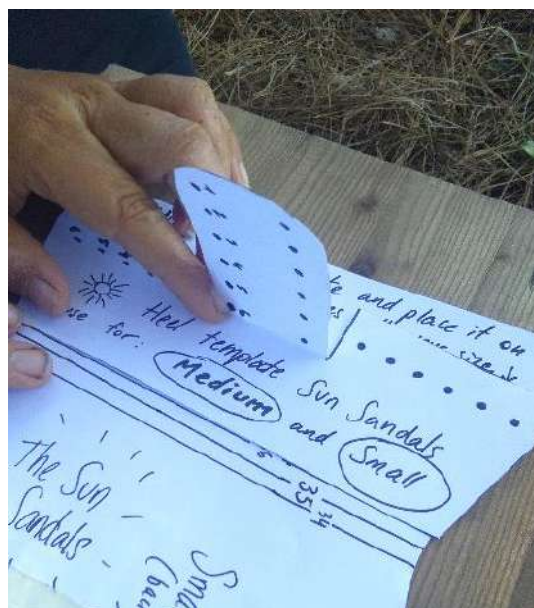
Glue or tape together the front and the back part of the pattern.

→ Two ways to finish the heel: stitched (without the heel template) or laced (with the heel template)



I have designed the patterns to enable you to customize the pattern according to the morphology of the feet. That's why you first choose the pattern according to the width of the feet.

The pattern can be used directly, without the heel template. If so, the heel will be stitched using an awl and waxed thread. This enables us to do a more precise fitting and to use a little less leather. [This technique is explained in the video only.](#)

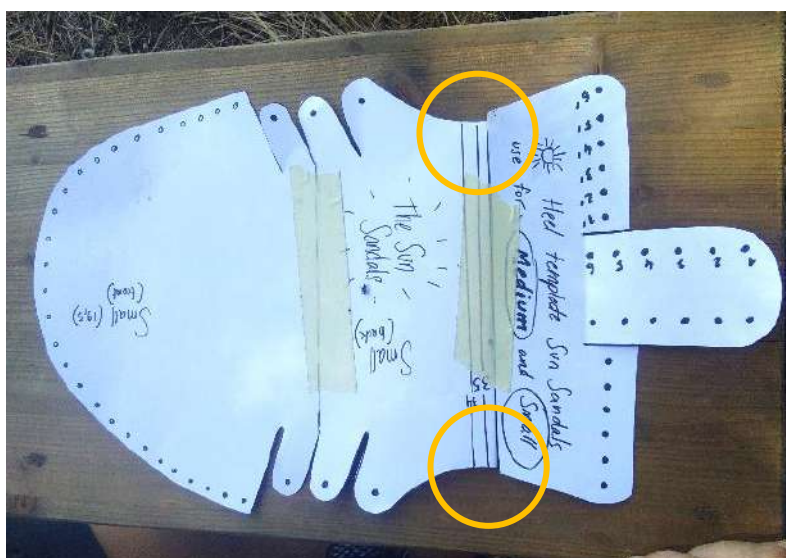


Otherwise, the heel will be laced using the heel template.

US/Canada	UK	European
5	2½	35
5½	3	35½
6	3½	36
6½	4	37
7	4½	37½
7½	5	38
8	5½	38½
8½	6	39
9	6½	40
9½	7	41
10	7½	42
10½	8	43

Take the matching heel template and place it on the line that corresponds with your size. (Sizes on the patterns are in European standard shoe size)

Glue or tape it in place. Fold or cut the back of the pattern to hide it behind the heel template.



Your pattern should look like this once you have assembled the three parts.

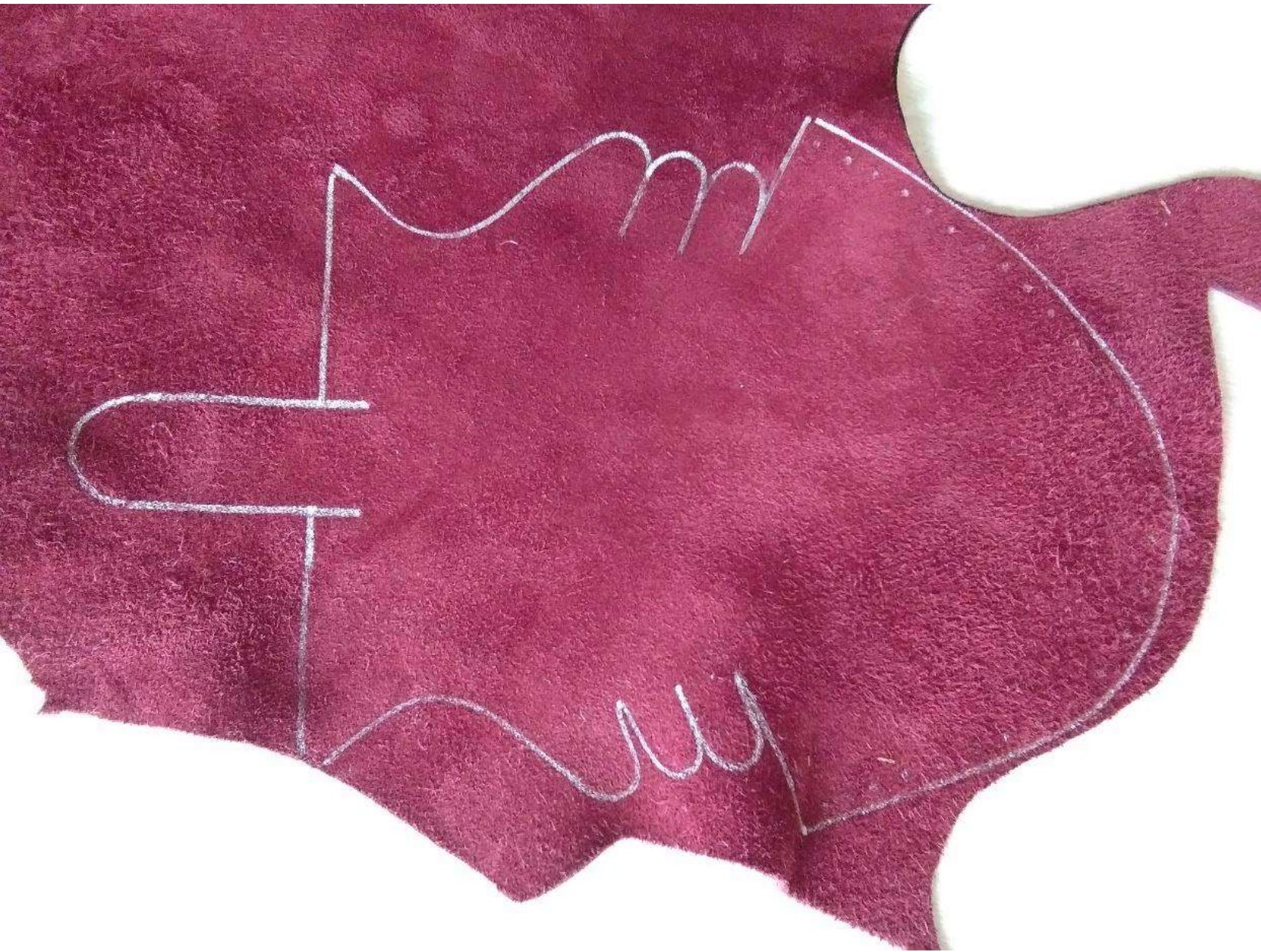
If necessary, you can improve the cut of the curve that joins the back part and the heel template (yellow circles).



Poke holes on the black dots with the leather punch.
Make sure you place your holes at an equal distance from the edge.

The pattern is now ready to use! It was almost the hardest part of all...

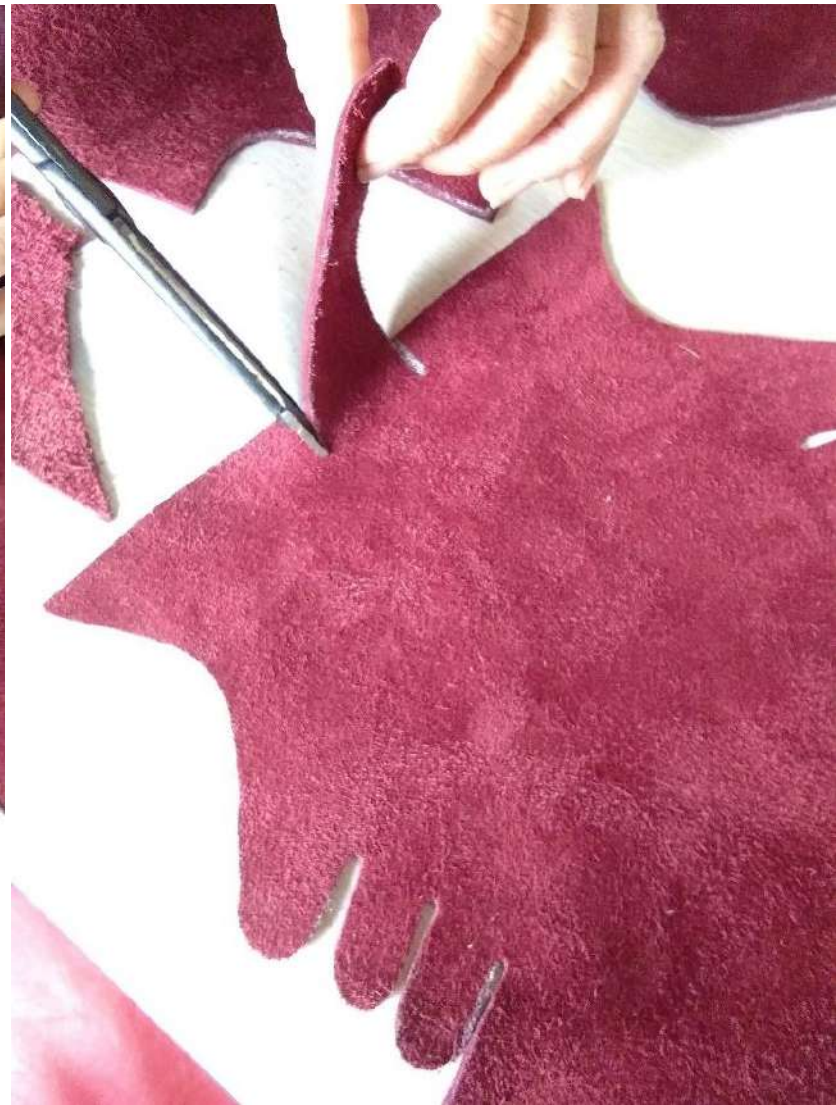
Now, we will copy that on the leather, cut it, make holes, and lace it through.



2- Tracing on the Leather

Place the pattern on the leather and draw all around it with a permanent marker. Draw the holes too.

Flip the pattern over to have a left and a right foot.



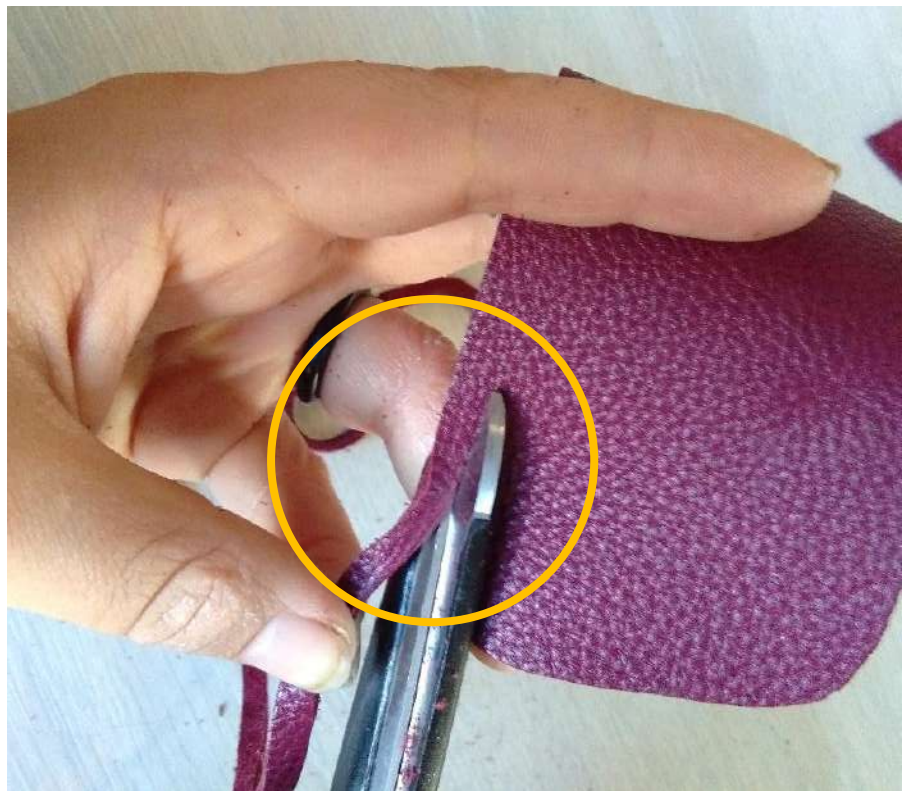
3- Cutting the Leather

Cut along the line. Follow the inside of the pen mark so that the line will completely disappear from the shoe.



4- Punching the Holes

Place yourself on the wooden tablet/block and follow the marks to punch the holes. Make sure you keep the same spacing from the edge, try to be as regular as possible.



5- Cutting Leather Lace

Take a piece of leather and round up the edges to turn it into a “potato-shape”.

Decide on the thickness of your lace, here, 1/8 inch or 3 to 4mm is good, and **start cutting in a spiraling manner** (clockwise if you are right-handed, and anti-clockwise if left-handed). While cutting, always **keep an eye on the spacing between your scissors and the edge**. If corners appear, round up the “potato” and continue.

I like to **apply some tension on the lace that I am cutting** to prevent the scissors from twisting. See how I use my thumb and my little finger to pinch the lace while my index and middle finger hold the leather piece.

Prepare about 80 cm / 32 inches or 2.6 feet of lace for each shoe front and 60 cm / 24 inches for the heel



6- Lacing the Front

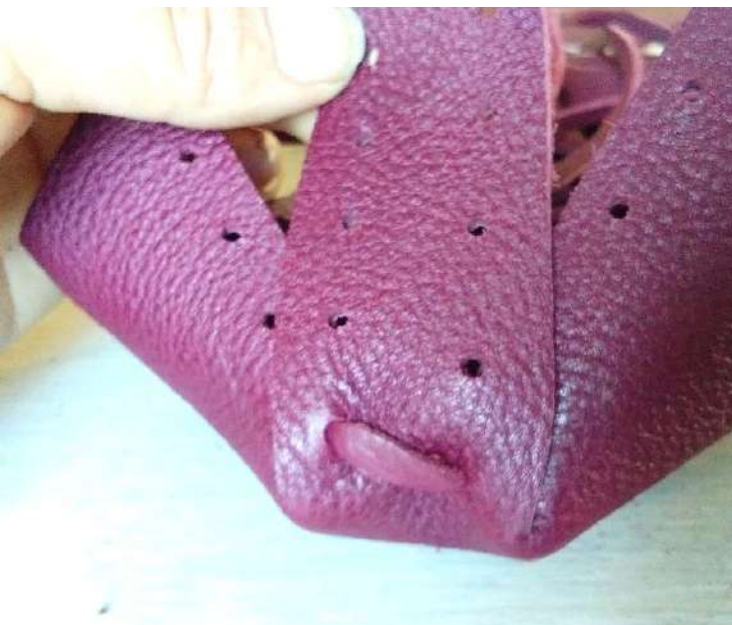


Before lacing, **test your lace by pulling on it**. It will stretch and if it breaks, it's better knowing it now.

Place the outside side in front of you and start lacing, going inside the first hole and outside the next hole. Continue in and out...

Pull tight and center your lace once you have finished lacing the front. This will bring the front part of the shoe together. **Make a double knot to secure the front part tightly.**

Finally, **lace the top petals in a cross pattern**, preferably pointing the lace from the outside towards the inside to flatten the petals on the feet.



7- Lacing the Heel

Take another piece of lace of around 60 cm / 24 inches.

Like in the pictures above, lace the heel through the tongue and the 2 first holes on the sides. Center the lace.

According to the pattern,
Hole 1 will join on top of 1', 2 matches with 2' and so on...

You can lace it in a cross pattern, going from one side to the other.
Finish up as you feel... There is no special technique here...





And here it is! Well done! Let's finish the second one now....

You can reinforce the petals with eyelets or by doubling the thickness of the leather (optional gluing). See this step in the video.



Here is the same pattern with cut petals at the front.

Cutting petals at the front can allow you to use more stiff leather that would not pucker easily.

For this, cut lines in a radiating manner in between each hole. Stop the cut at the base of the toes.

Thank you for following this tutorial.

I always appreciate receiving your feedback and pictures of your creation.

Feel free to message me via email:
contact@earthingmoccasins.com



One Step Further:

Patterns in Small Sizes from New-Born to Teenagers

[Patterns are also available for babies and kids up to teenagers' sizes on our Etsy shop](#)

Making Soles

You can start wearing your sandals just like that, but with time, the leather will eventually wear out. No worries, you can easily glue soles on them to make them last for years. Find out how to make thin leather or rubber soles on the following pages or in the bonus section of the video tutorial.

[Extra leather](#) or [rubber](#) for making soles are available in our Etsy shop.



Kits

We have put together leather and tools kits to enable you to get started easily. We selected beautiful and soft premium suede leather from Spain that we combine with thicker bull leather for soles and laces. The toolset includes an awl, a leather punch, two saddlers' needles, and some waxed thread.

Other Materials

Some of my students have made the Sun Sandals with thick textile or even felt. Possibilities are endless... If you use fabric, think about a way to prevent the material from fraying.

All our tutorials and craft supplies are found online here:
www.etsy.com/shop/earthingmoccasins

Bonus / Making Soles

Pictures are from "the Heart" moccasins but it's the same technique for any kind of leather moccasins that I teach.

I don't recommend making soles straight away after you've finished making the sandals. It is best to wait until you can see the footprint under the shoe to make the soles. Therefore, you will see where to stick the soles and how to shape them precisely. It would usually take 2-3 weeks. You can wait longer but it is best to do it before there is a hole...

Over the years, soles can be replaced as many times as necessary.





Tools

You will need:

- A brush, a sponge, or a wet wipe to clean your shoes.

- **Leather or thin rubber sheet** (available on our online shop)

We have found that too stiff leather makes slippery, uncomfortable soles that get undone easily. If you want to keep the same comfort and high sensory feedback as with bare moccasins best is to use rather soft leather (can be the same as for the moccasins).

We have also been using thin (3mm) compact rubber sheets with much satisfaction. It makes the moccasins more water-resistant as the water doesn't penetrate through the sole. It is very flexible and lasts quite long.

- **Universal Contact cement glue** (from your local hardware shop)

The quality of the glue is quite important but no need to buy

expensive specialized glue, most hardware stores have what you need. You can find it in liquid or gel form. Both work but I prefer liquid one. I think it penetrates the leather a little better.

We use glue instead of stitching because the stitch would touch the ground and not last.

- **Something to apply the glue** (a stick, a piece of plastic bottle, or a paintbrush + solvent)

It is easier and more precise to apply the glue with a large paintbrush, but you would need some solvent to clean it afterward. Alternatively, I have often used a piece of the plastic bottle cut into a kind of drop shape to make a disposable spatula. In the last resort, you could use a wooden stick cut with a clean tip, it does the job...

- **An awl**, or any other sharp and pointy object to scratch the leather.

- **A pair of sharp scissors**. Good kitchen scissors usually are enough.

How to Make the Soles:

1) Cleaning

Prepare your moccasins for gluing soles by **making sure the bottom is totally clean and dry**. Scratch and brush dry as much dirt as possible and finish cleaning with a damp sponge or a wet wipe. Wipe out the excess water and let it dry fully.

Tip:

We have found that cleaning and preparing the shoes well is just as important as the glue itself, if not more.

If any dirt, dust, or humidity is remaining, it could prevent the glue from sticking well and all your work will be done for nothing...



2) Scratching

With the awl, draw around your footprint and scratch the surface that will receive glue, meaning, everywhere it touches the ground. You can enlarge the sole under the arch area even if it doesn't touch the ground. Don't hesitate to scratch quite hard to open the leather to receive the glue deeper.

This is one of the most important steps to make sure your sole will stick well but also because you are drawing the final shape of the sole.

3) Applying the Glue

CAUTION: Use the glue in a well-ventilated area or even outdoors as the solvent contained in the glue can be toxic. Read the recommendations on the packaging.



Tip:
As the leather absorbs a lot of glue, you can apply two layers of glue (waiting that is dries in between)

The general idea is to glue the shoes on a wide piece of leather or rubber before cutting the soles.

This glue is meant to be applied on both sides and will stick as soon as it is in contact with another glued surface. On the opposite, it will not stick where there isn't any glue on the shoes.

It is not possible to move it once it was glued. You have only one chance. That's why if you try cutting the soles first and sticking them in the right position, it will most likely be a mess with the sole not aligning, glue sticking out, etc. So please, follow the method below:

Spread the glue evenly all over the piece of leather/rubber that you will use for soles and over the bottom of your moccasins.

On the shoe side, try being as precise as possible on the edges because this will determine the final shape of the soles.

Let it dry until it is not sticky to the finger anymore (around 10 minutes). For optimum bondage, you can apply a second layer of glue.



4) Gluing It Together:



Place the moccasins on the leather/rubber and press firmly/hammer them together. Make sure it contacts everywhere and especially on the edges of the soles.

Make little patches if there are holes you need to cover inside.

Note: The glue will hold straight away but it reaches its maximum strength after 24 hours. It is best to wait a day before walking with your moccasins again.



5) Cutting the Soles

Separate the two shoes and carefully cut around the sole as close as possible to the edge of the glue on the shoe side. Be very cautious to avoid cutting the moccasin itself. If you are right-handed, I find it a little easier to cut in an anti-clockwise direction.



After cutting, press again, especially on the edges that are more vulnerable to opening up. That's it!

Unglue and start again when you need new soles. (or glue on top of the old layer).



Making Other Moccasins

Now that you have a taste of making and wearing handmade soft-soled leather shoes, you might be interested in learning more about moccasin-making.

I have developed a whole range of patterns and video tutorials to enable even strict beginners to make their custom-fitted leather moccasins as easily as possible.



All the moccasins that I make are done with a minimum of tools (scissors, awl, needle, and thread) and can be made in only a few hours. With the printable patterns and the step-by-step video course, no previous experience is necessary.

The most interesting part, in my opinion, is that all the patterns that I teach are made to be easily adjustable to any kind of morphology. Thin and long feet or short and wide ones, it doesn't matter.



Find out more about the different designs and patterns on our website and our Etsy shop.

www.earthingmoccasins.com

www.etsy.com/shop/earthingmoccasins





How I Became a Moccasin-Maker...

These Sandals were the first kind of shoes I made. I was 18 and traveled for the first time in Spain to visit a friend for Christmas. I had taken nothing else than my big hiking boots with me and of course, I got tired of going around in them daily; especially under the sunny weather of south of Spain. He had a beautiful pair of these sandals made from rich brown nubuck leather. They looked natural and precious. I was lucky to be able to wear them to give my feet relief from my big heavy boots and soon enough, I did not want to wear my hiking shoes anymore. Of course, it didn't take me long to think: "Hang on a minute! These are easy to make!" and there I was, in an op-shop, looking for the perfect leather vest that I could use for my next creation. I found this beautiful beige leather jacket for 2 euros and when I got back to our camp, I opened up my friend's sandals to copy the pattern and make myself a pair straight away.

When I got back to Paris where I was studying design, I did not want to wear anything else anymore! I was so in love with my new sandals. Friends started commenting on it and they wanted me to make them a pair too! Even my uncle suggested: "why not start your own shoe business instead of working for unworthy student jobs?" I was surprised, I did not think this design was a "professional shoe design" and that I could live from it. I knew it was mass-produced in India for 2 euros, sold 10, and that if I wanted to make a business out of this, I needed to find something better. At this point, I only made a few pairs for friends and gave up.

2 years later, after quitting my studies and traveling for a year, I was back to the point where I desperately needed money and I was horrified by the idea of falling back into a crappie unqualified job... I was in Asia and decided to head to Australia with my New Zealand boyfriend to find some work. On our way, we stopped in Bali. In a tropical holiday setting, I was stressed, my money was finished. I was praying to find something meaningful and creative for work. I knew I had the talent to make beautiful things with my hands and I was fed up with computer work. I wanted something I could travel with, something that would match with my ethics, something I could make by myself from A to Z! I had to find something!!!

The answer was dancing around me on the feet of a Balinese man. When we ended the dance workshop, he sat next to me. Almost everyone was dancing barefoot but he had shoes. Unusual shoes were more like a second skin. They looked like they were perfectly molded on his feet. I stared. I had never seen such beautifully designed shoes (The Heart Moccasins, available in the tutorial on my shop here). When I saw them, I had an urge to get rid of my old and dirty rubber flip-flops. I quickly inquired the man where he had found such beautiful shoes and he took them off for me to look closer. The world stopped; I was IN the shoe. Straight-away my mind was trying to understand how I could make it. He said "It's a friend of mine; he makes them and sometimes comes to sell them here. I heard he should come sometime soon..." Soon when? I did not have much time before leaving the country, would I get the chance to meet him?!

A day or two before my departure, the volcano next to Bali started erupting, releasing massive ash clouds into the sky and the airport was closed. Our flight to Australia was delayed until the volcano would stop, impossible to know when... so we continued to go dancing...

Two weeks later, beside the dance hall, an old skinny man with a white hat and two braids was stitching leather under a kiosk. "IT'S HIM!", I jumped!!! I landed straight in front of him, the shoemaker, and before even thinking, I was asking eagerly: "Can you teach me?!" He stared at me from head to toes, surprised.

I heard customers were sometimes waiting in front of his doorstep at night for him to come home but I guess that he was not used to seeing young women like me, asking so enthusiastically to learn his skill. He did not say much, yet he invited me to meet him in the afternoon to "see what I could do, maybe stitch a pair". I was ECSTATIC! I did not know why yet but, something in me felt so right!

I stitched my first pair for myself, and he said: "You're doing quite good!". He had too many customers and was going to leave, volcano or not, a few days later so he offered me to help him for a few days and get to learn a bit more. For three days, I gave my best, trying to be precise and fast, and most of all to remember everything he would show me. "Down three and back two...and cut!".



I tried not getting any blisters on my fingers and to get along with this curious man called Jory. Before leaving, he invited me to join him in Australia to be his apprentice and to help him restock for the summer season. I could not believe it! YEEEESSSS! There was my new job! I was not even in Australia yet that it was being presented to me!



So, I landed, a few days after him in Australia. It was in December 2015. He dropped us in the bush behind the beach in Brunswick Heads, a trendy fish-and-chip town on the riverbank. I and my boyfriend had nothing but a tarp and a blanket for two to sleep and a small backpack with a few clothes, our wallets were empty. We had nothing and seemed like homeless, sleeping on the ground with the bush turkeys and the wallabies but, I was happy. I was going to learn how to make moccasins and even be paid for it!



I spent the next month meeting Jory on the public tables near the beach, making a small production line of moccasins. He would show me for an hour or two what to do and leave me with a big bunch of shoes to work on for the next day. During one month, I probably made over a hundred pairs for him. I got to practice and learn almost all the mistakes and how to fix them... I went on the markets with him and became a good moccasin maker.

When I decided it was time for me to take off, I had the skill and the patterns but not enough money to get started to buy any leather, so I made crowdfunding to gather some orders affront to buy my first batch of skins. The problem was that I was used to custom-fit the moccasins straight on the people's feet. And for the crowdfunding, I was asked to make them from measurements. This was tricky! On 20 pairs, only 2 or 3 did not fit well, it was a satisfying rate of

good fittings and I had super positive feedbacks, but I was not satisfied with this way of working. What I liked more than everything was to see the smile and the spontaneous dance of my customers when they were putting their new moccasins on. When I was sending them, I was not able to see that... I was just stressed about mess-up and sending a pair that will never be used... A year later, after more practice on my customers on local markets, I thought: "why not make tutorials, if people make them on their feet, I would be released from that stress of fitting them at distance? So, I started giving workshops and writing these tutorials that are now available online.



Workshops in small groups



Since then, I shared my skills in live workshops as I traveled and online. I also started designing my boot patterns.

I constantly try to create new patterns and tutorials to enlarge my offer based on the same principle of custom-made sizes.

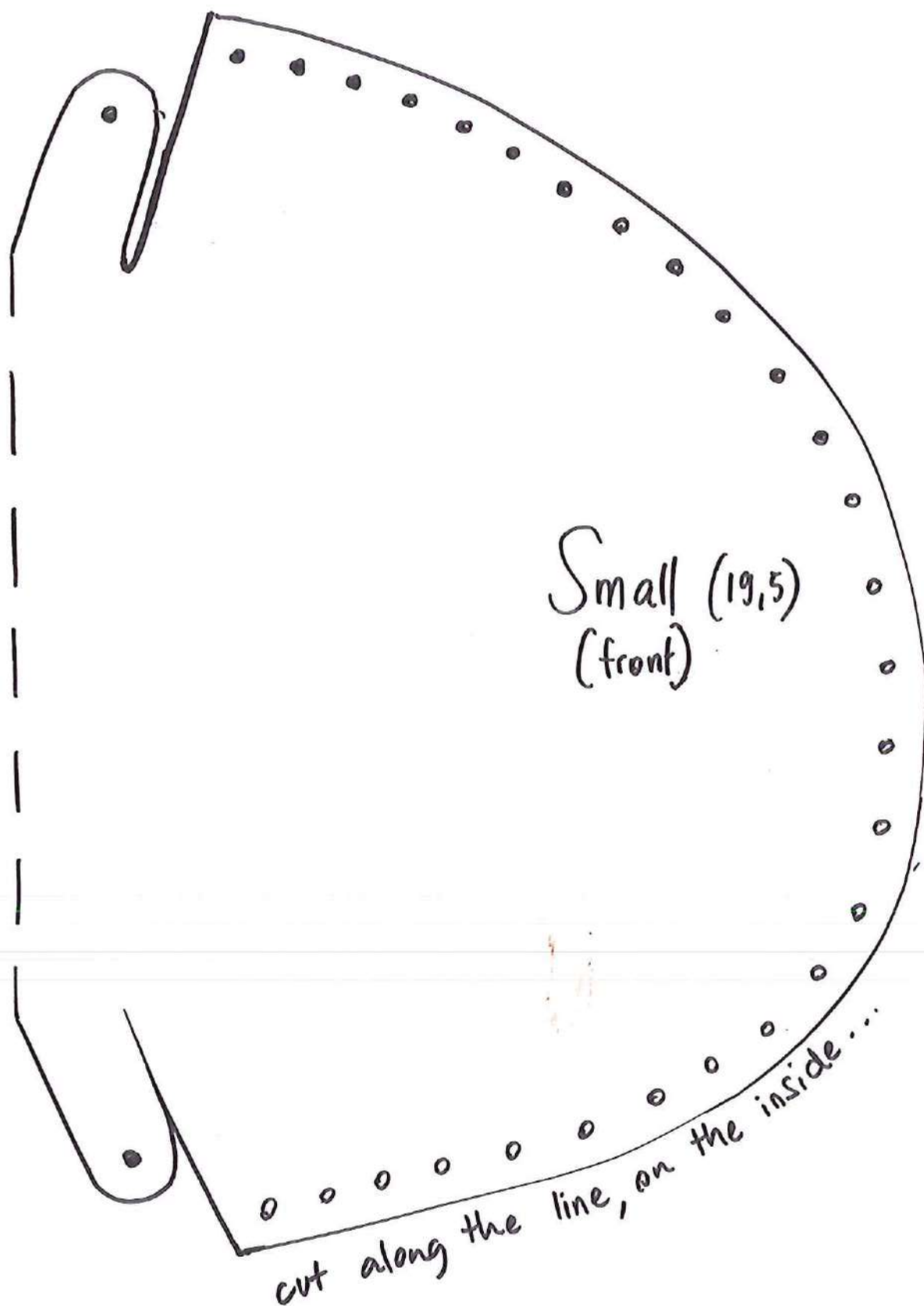
To finish, I would like to acknowledge my dear husband, Joa, who started making moccasins with me in 2018. Without him, I would have not been able to give you access to all this knowledge as he has created our website:

(www.earththingmoccasins.com).

He was editing most of the video tutorials and is actively working behind the stage to keep up with your orders, questions, and much more.

I hope that you will make good use of the information that I share and of your handmade moccasins.

"For the Lord gave you shoes to walk in his ways."



cm. 0 1 2 3 4 5

this is the pattern we will
use in the "Sun Sandals"
video tutorial...

Use the feel template and place it on
↓ the line that matches with your size ↓

34
35
36
37
38
39

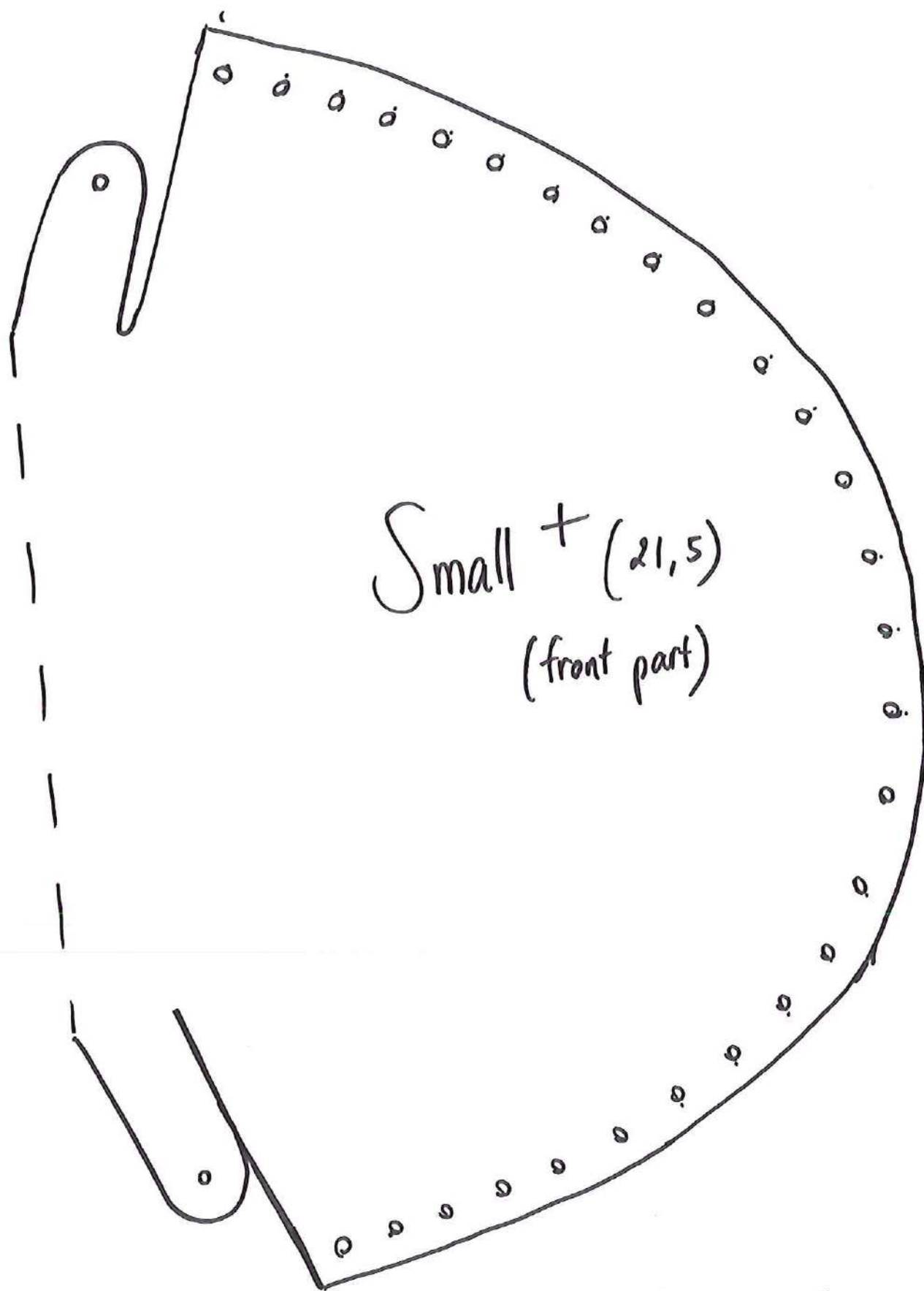
Small
(back)

The Sun
Sandals

join with front part

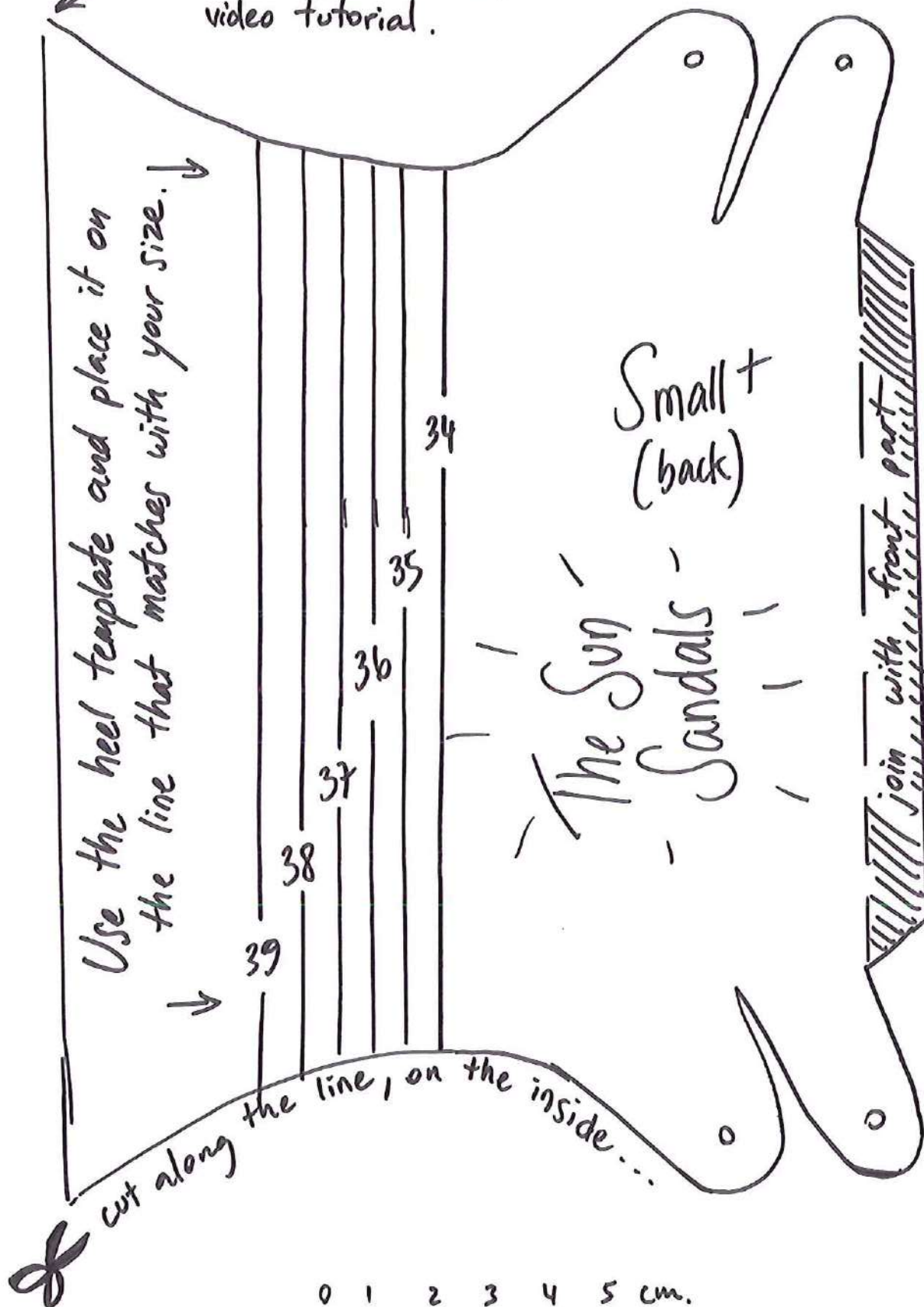
cut along the black line, on the inside...

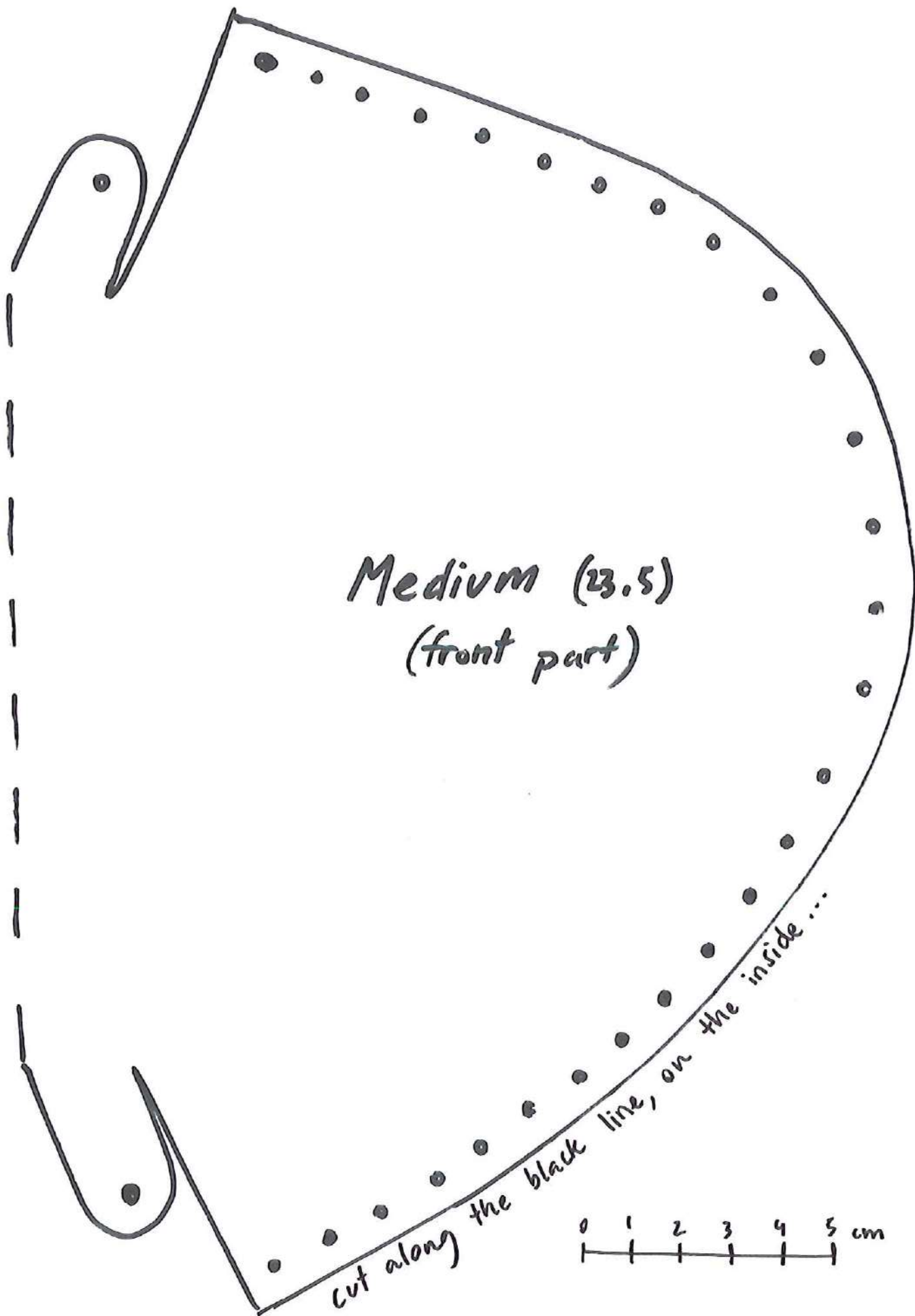
0 1 2 3 4 5 cm



0 1 2 3 4 5 cm

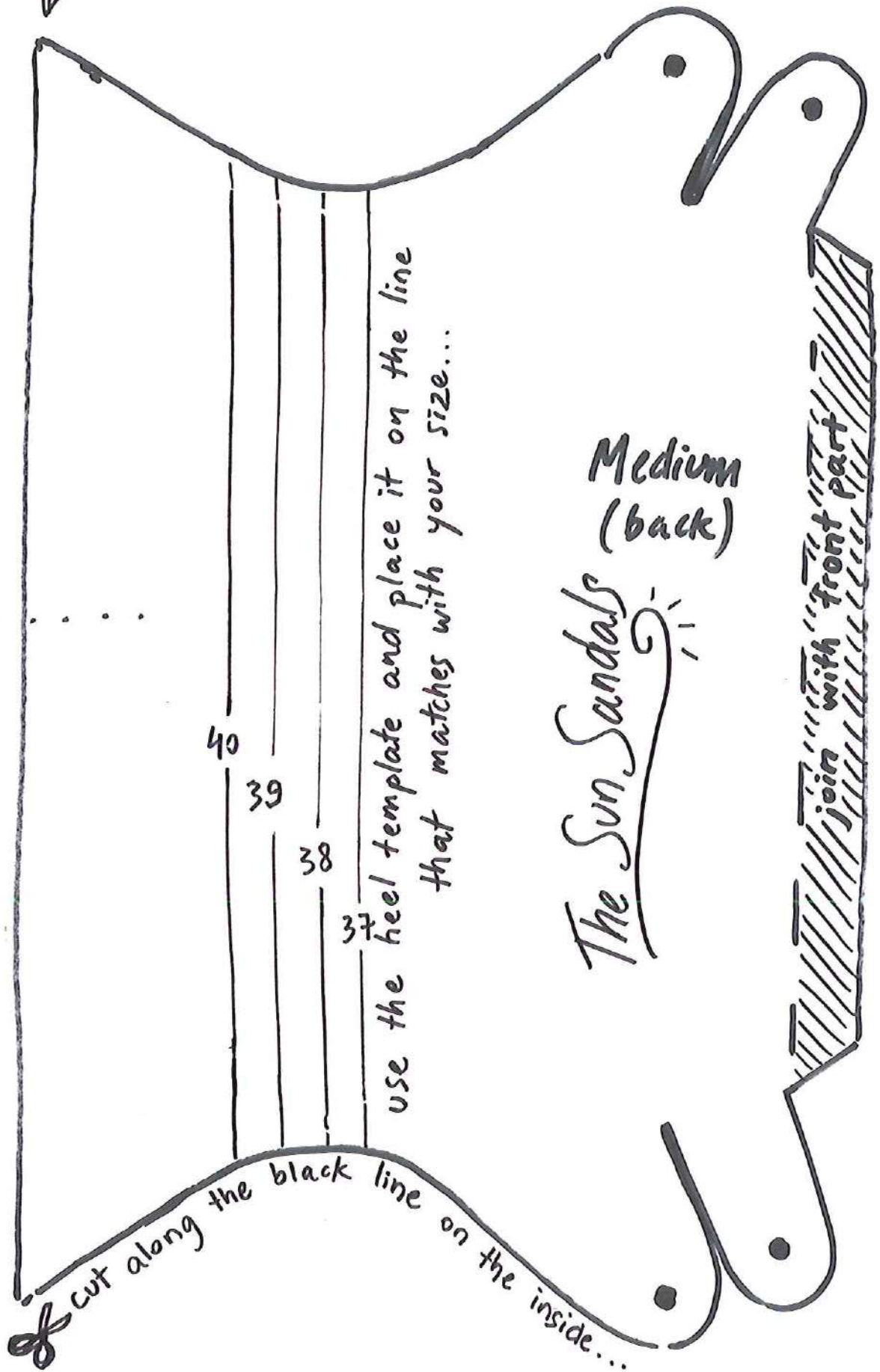
this is the pattern we will use
in the "Sun Sandals"
video tutorial.

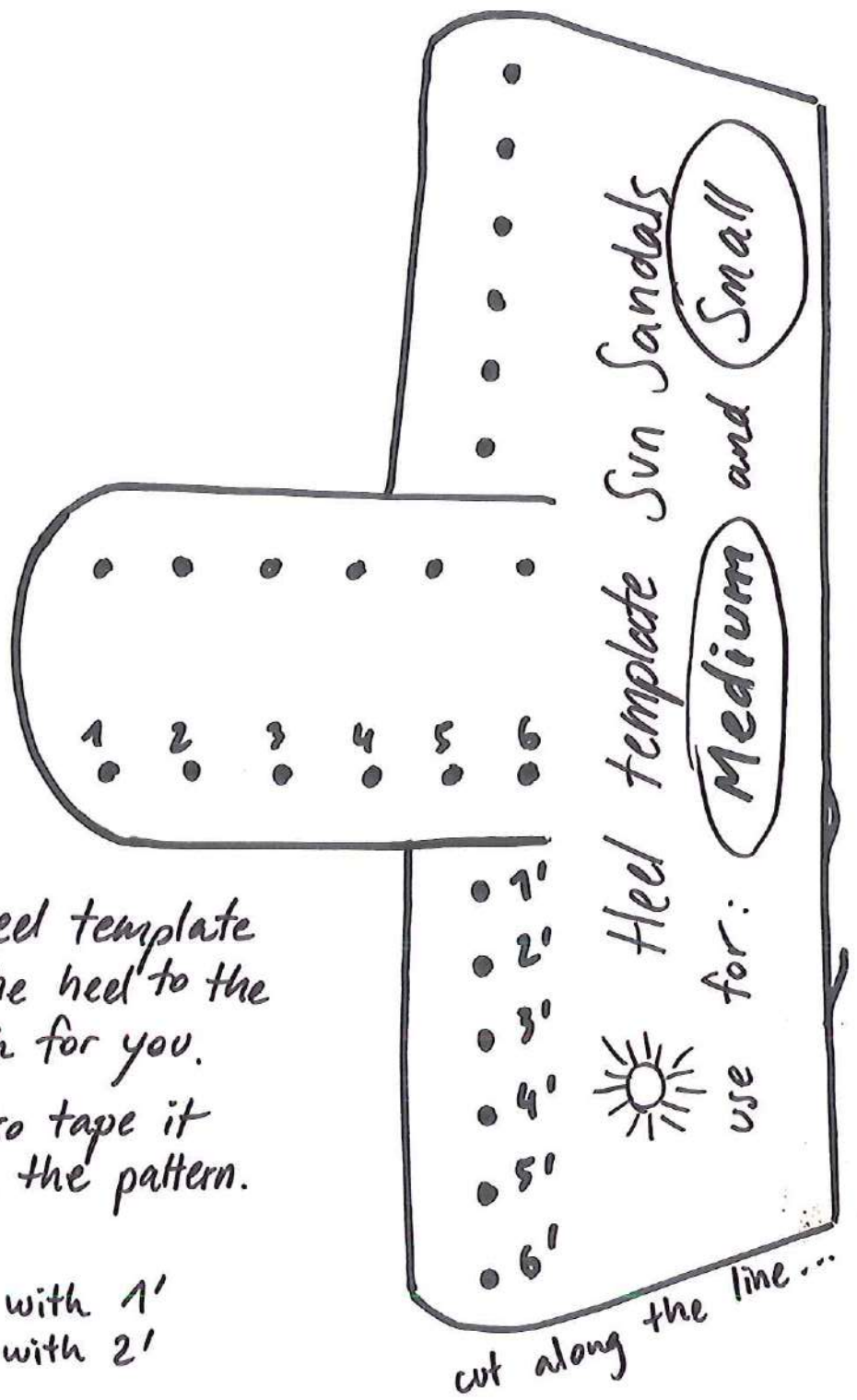




This is the pattern we
will use in the "Sun Sandals"
video tutorial

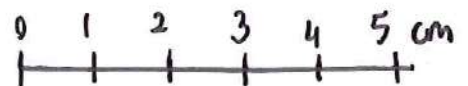
0
1
2
3
4
5
cm

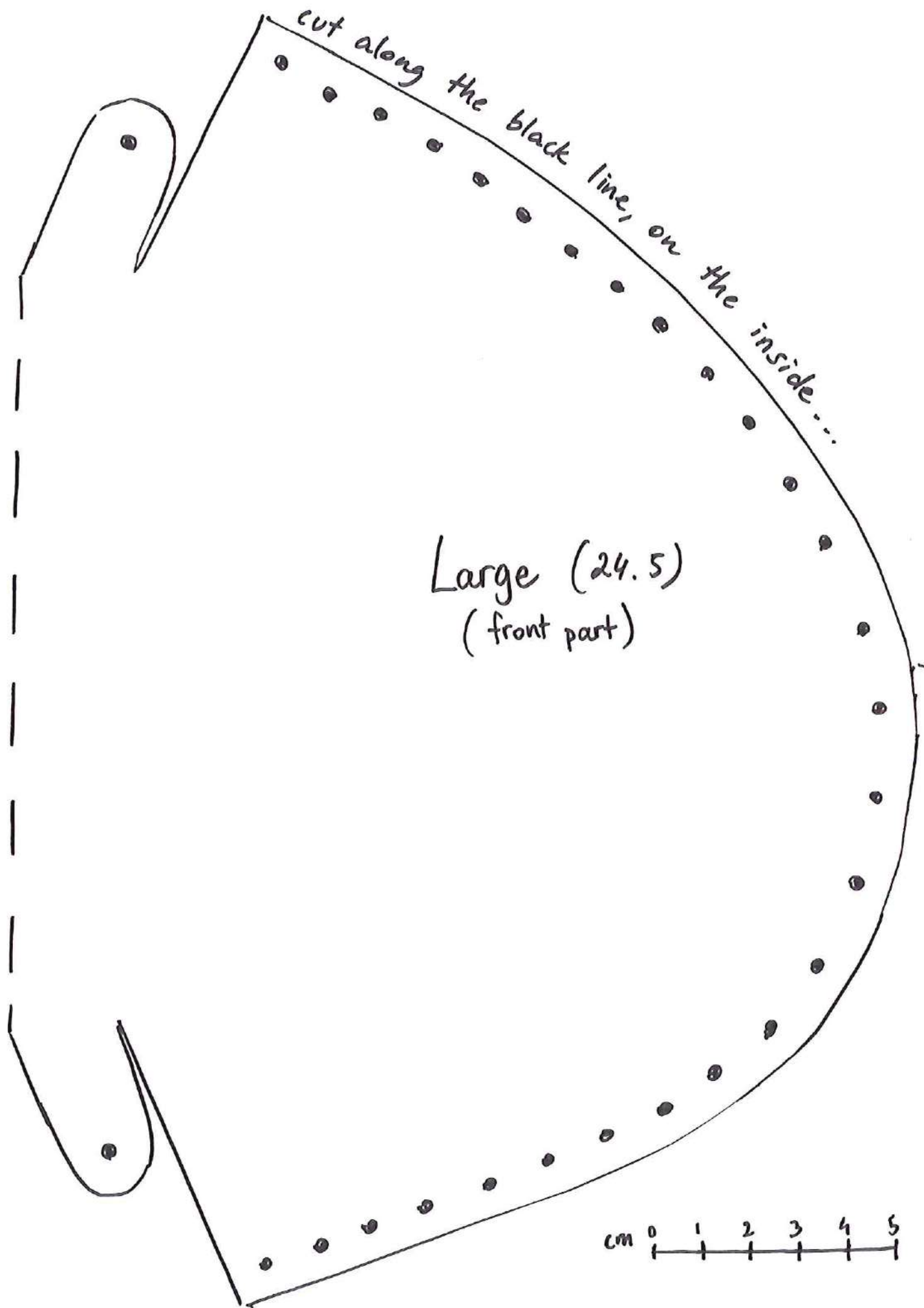




* Use the heel template to draw the heel to the right length for you.
You can also tape it directly on the pattern.

* 1 matches with 1'
2 matches with 2'
3 with 3'
and so on...





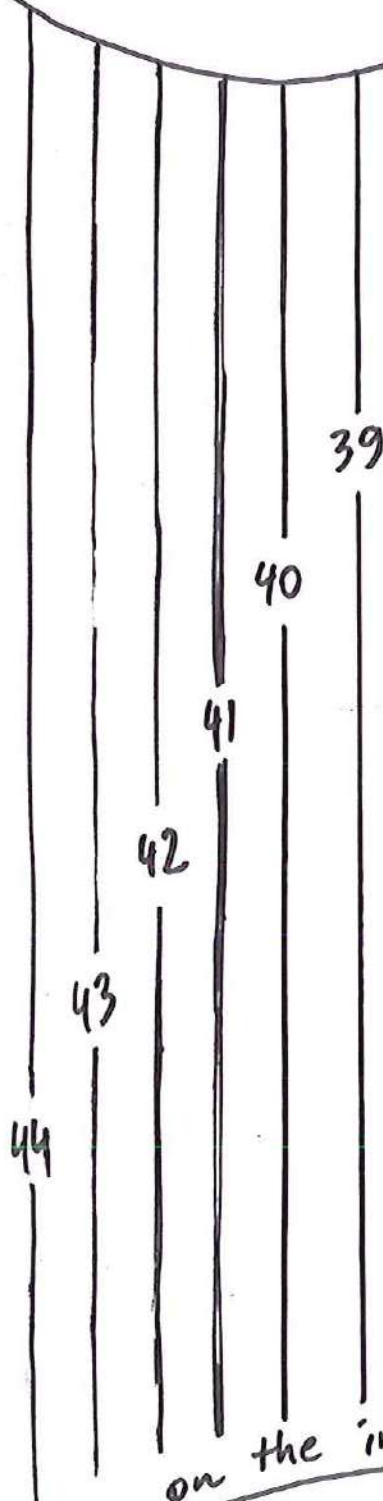
Large (24.5)
(front part)

cut along the black line, on the inside...

cm 0 1 2 3 4 5

← This pattern will be used
in the video tutorial
of the "Sun Sandals"...

Use the heel template (large) and place it on
↓ the line that matches with your size. ↓



Large (back)

The Sun
Sandals

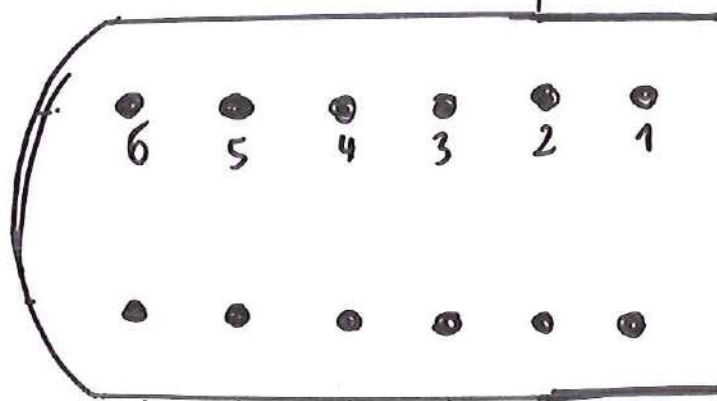
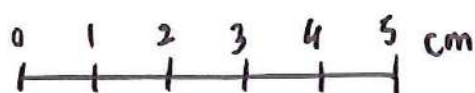
cut along the line, on the inside



join with "the front part"

* Use the heel template to draw the heel to the right length for you.
You can also tape it directly on the pattern.

* 1 matches with 1', 2 with 2'
3 with 3' and so on...



✂ cut along the line...

